



POLICYMAKER WORKING GROUP REGIONAL SOLICITATION

September 22, 2025

Working Group Attendees:

James Hovland; Deb Barber; Glen Johnson; Mary Liz Holberg; Brian Martinson; Victor Lake; Reva Chamblis; Toni Carter; Anjuli Cameron; Jon Ulrich.

Other Attendees:

Steve Peterson, Elaine Koutsoukos, Charles Carlson, Joe Barbeau, Cole Hiniker, Amy Vennewitz, Joe Widing, Wendy Duren (Met Council); Molly Stewart, Lydia Statz (SRF Consulting Group); Molly McCartney (MnDOT); Carla Stueve (Hennepin County); Allison Bell (Bellwether Consulting); Ashley Hudson (Bolton and Menk); Lisa Freese (Scott County)

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

390 Robert St N St Paul, MN 55101; Lower Level Conference Room 1A

Project Update

Molly Stewart and Steve Peterson provided a summary of the recent Policymaker Working Group and Technical Steering Committee meetings.

Funding Ranges and Targets

Steve Peterson opened with a historical overview of how funding ranges were previously established. The group explored the idea of shifting from rigid funding ranges to more adaptable targets. This approach was broadly supported, with Member Martinson noting that targets offer applicants a clearer sense of available funding while preserving flexibility. He also emphasized that the proposed changes should not be interpreted as diverting funds away from roadway projects, as those investments remain intact.

Member Ulrich raised a question about whether a project could apply under the roadway category but allocate safety-related components to the safety category. Steve Peterson clarified that while safety is embedded in roadway funding, projects may choose to apply under safety if it improves competitiveness. Ultimately, this decision about whether to allow applications in multiple categories rests with TAB.

Two funding target options were presented to the group: one which set a \$30 million Safety funding target, and another which set the Safety funding target at \$40 million, shifting the extra \$10 million from the Roadway categories. Amy Vennewitz reminded attendees that these targets are starting points, not final allocations, and that staff will develop additional funding scenarios for TAB's consideration.

Concerns were raised about the quality of applications in newly created categories. Member Ulrich questioned what would happen if safety applications were underwhelming, to which Steve Peterson responded that funding could be reallocated. Molly Stewart noted strong technical support for a safety-specific category, and Elaine Koutsoukos emphasized the importance of messaging—targets should not be seen as guarantees. Member Carter cautioned that using historic levels as a baseline could result in lower-than-expected awards for safety. The group recommended setting funding targets based

on historic funding levels, to help TAB preserve flexibility and adapt depending on the quality and quantity of applications in certain categories. There was consensus to set the funding target for safety at \$30 million (option 1).

ABRT Funding Minimums and Maximums

Discussion turned to Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT) funding. Member Holberg expressed comfort with a \$30 million minimum but warned that \$35 million might be excessive. Member Barber proposed \$30 million as a minimum, with the option to reallocate additional funds if other transit projects prove less competitive. Member Holberg supported this proposal, noting that legislative unpredictability makes TAB's funding decisions the most reliable source of certainty.

Member Ulrich requested a review of ABRT ridership before and after implementation. Member Barber confirmed that ridership has increased across all lines. Member Chamblis added that priorities should extend beyond ridership, advocating for balanced investment across modes. The group reached consensus in support of a \$30 million minimum for ABRT.

GHG Offsets

The group then reviewed proposed qualifying language surrounding ownership of any potential greenhouse gas (GHG) offsets created by Regional Solicitation projects. Molly McCartney provided background on GHG offsets, noting that MnDOT is still working through the details in collaboration with the Met Council. Member Holberg asked when local agencies would have input, stressing the importance of their involvement. Charles Carlson acknowledged that the issue is still evolving and not yet ready for formal recommendations. Member Martinson expressed concern about the legal implications and hoped that legal counsel had reviewed the language.

Community and Equity Considerations

The group reviewed updates to equity criteria, which have been shaped by input from original authors and past applicants. These measures are grounded in policy direction from the TPP. Vennewitz noted TSC's concern about holding funding guarantee recipients accountable, and the Met Council committed to working with those communities.

Member Martinson praised the thoughtful approach but urged a broader definition of "community" to include non-drivers and other underserved groups. Member Chamblis proposed reframing community engagement to ensure tangible benefits as an outcome. The group was asked to weigh-in on whether the current measures are on track. Member Holberg requested that the equity framework be discussed with the policymakers after testing, citing federal opposition to equity as a concern. She also warned that a funding guarantee could allow poorly scored applications to receive funding. Member Ulrich echoed this concern, questioning why equity alone warranted a guarantee while safety did not.

Next Steps

The next meeting will again focus on performance metrics and the review timeline for the draft applications. The draft application materials are moving through review by technical stakeholders and will be available for review by policymakers later this fall.

The next Policymaker Working Group meeting is scheduled for October 15.